CONFERENCE ON IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE URBAN TRAVEL POLICIES IN RUSSIA AND OTHER CIS COUNTRIES

30 September – 1 October 2004

Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation
Sadovaya-Samotechnaya str.10
Moscow

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Jack SHORT
Secretary General
ECMT (France)
Minister, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you on behalf of the ECMT to this workshop on Implementing Sustainable Urban Travel Policies in Russia and Other CIS Countries. I would like to sincerely thank the Russian Ministry of Transport for hosting this event. We are particularly grateful to Mr. Vadim Donchenko of the Russian Transport Research Centre, as well as to Mr. Moscvitchev of the Ministry and his staff for working with us over the last months to make this event possible.

This workshop comes at the beginning of a very important year for us, as Russia has assumed presidency of the ECMT and will host our annual Council of Ministers meeting here next Spring. Work has begun on a variety of policy issues that will be discussed at our Council meeting, among those, the difficult topic of how best to organize and finance urban public transport. So our discussions here over the next two days will be an important input to the work on urban travel that we bring to Ministers for consideration.

Through the Vadim Donchenko’s active participation in our steering group on sustainable urban travel, Russia has taken an active part in our work on that topic for over a decade now.

In working to better understand the range of urban travel issues before policy makers, ECMT has tried with all countries involved to draw up a forward looking policy agenda for bringing about more sustainable travel in urban areas. This takes as a starting point our shared aim for dynamic, economically viable, healthy, safe, livable cities; our shared aim to reduce -- in all of its
dimensions -- the damage that transport does to the environment, as well as our shared aim to provide effective access to employment and services for all people.

Our first report in the early 90s on Sustainable Urban Travel set out a flexible strategy to meet these goals. The strategy encompassed elements of best practice, policy innovation and -- in order to achieve long term goals -- clear economic signals to transport sector stakeholders. The strategy garnered broad political acceptance from many transport, environment and urban planning Ministries. But we must say that some of the elements of the strategy were not accepted everywhere.

In the years following the publication of this work, we saw that implementation, especially of fiscal instruments like increasing fuel prices, was controversial and ran into difficulties. Not only pricing proved difficult to implement, however; land use measures, car restraint and traffic calming measures, bus priorities, even speed limits were opposed or blocked in large number of cities.

So our recent work on Implementing Sustainable Urban Travel Policies has focused on better understanding the range of barriers that make implementation of integrated urban travel policies so difficult. You will hear a bit more about how we are approaching this work in a few minutes.

It is therefore particularly interesting to be here in Russia to examine with you the very specific combination of challenges that you are facing as you work to improve travel in your cities.
Your extensive public transport system is a very positive aspect on which you can base your efforts to improve urban travel. However, the ever-growing pressure from increasing private vehicle use and congestion means that demand for car travel have to be addressed by policy makers at both national and local levels of government in the near future. Finding means for ensuring the renewal and renovation of your public transport vehicles and infrastructure, as well as exploring how residential and commercial land use in your large cities impact travel behaviour will also be critical aspects of your policy initiatives to improve urban travel.

The programme we have before us has brought together some of the world’s leading experts in urban travel, environment and health. Whilst they are prepared to provide us with a formidable amount of information on a wide range of urban travel issues, it will be our challenge as participants to process this information and apply it to particular contexts at home. While here, we hope that you will likewise challenge these experts to focus their expertise on the particular difficulties that you are facing in developing and implementing urban travel strategies.

With this, I would like to thank you all in advance for your participation. I look forward to a stimulating and fruitful exchange of ideas.

Thank you.